

**Listing of Claims:**

1-7 (Canceled)

8. (Currently Amended) An e-mail message filtering method, comprising:

a security manager receiving a plurality of [[an]] e-mail messages from a remote network server, the plurality of email messages including at least a first email message associated with a first recipient identifier and a second email message associated with second recipient identifiers, the first and second recipient identifiers associated with different users ~~the e-mail message associated with at least one recipient identifier, the first and second~~ [[the]] email messages including signature data;

the security manager extracting the signature data from the first and from the second e-mail messages;

the security manager verifying the extracted first and second signature data by accessing a signature verification server; and

the security manager transmitting the e-mail message to said first ~~at least one~~ recipient identifier by employing an email transmission protocol in response to at least [[one]]a first predetermined result of said verifying of the first signature data and transmitting the e-mail message to said second recipient identifier by employing an email transmission protocol in response to at least a first predetermined result of said verifying of the second signature data.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8, further comprising employing an automated policy to determine whether the e-mail message signature should be verified.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 8, further comprising employing an automated policy to determine the requirements for verification of signature data.

11-12 (Cancelled)

13. (currently Amended) A method for signing an e-mail message, comprising:

receiving a plurality of [[an]] e-mail messages by a security manager of an e-mail firewall, at least a first message and a second message are from different users associated with different user systems;

the security manager determining if a signature is required for at least two of the received e-mail messages by applying a signature policy which refers to policy rules to determine whether a signature is required by reference to attributes of an e-mail message;

retrieving a signing certificate for the at least two messages in response to said applying a signature policy by reference to a signature policy which refers to policy rules to identify the kind of signing certificate to retrieve by reference to attributes of an e-mail message;

applying the retrieved signing certificate to each[[the]] message; and

forwarding each[[the]] message for further processing by the e-mail firewall.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 13 wherein said determining if a signature is required for the message is by applying a first signature policy and said retrieving of a signature is by reference to a second signature policy.

15. (Original) The method of Claim 13 wherein said determining and said retrieving is by reference to applying of one signature policy.